2: Caroe S-4 (no date) 1953 RL1 Soviet Central Asia RL3

XII

INDUSTRIALIZATION AND PUBLIC WORKS

I shall follow the arduous trail blazed by the surveyors, who are charting the course of irrigation systems, by the botanists and forestry experts, who are determining the future flora of the desert, and by the zoologists and ornithologists, who are to populate the new forests and gardens with beasts and birds. I shall meet the soil scientists and agronomists engaged in selecting the crops to be grown on the fields and plantations that will alter the face of the desert. My path will be the path of the archaeologists, who are doing their share to help the canal builders by unearthing the secrets of ancient cultures buried for centuries in the sands. . . .

BORIS KRINITSKY, on Turkmenian Canal [1]

THE main objective of the two first Five-Year Plans was to create a centre of heavy and light industry in the Urals [2] and beyond, which should be out of reach of any invader, whether Germans coming from the west or Japanese from the east. At an immense cost in human lives and suffering, through scenes of welter and confusion, often sadly lagging but always driven on by a grim determination from above, the great programme staggered through fantastic difficulties during construction until it reached the serious production stage, round about 1935. It was an immense mechanical achievement, and there can be no doubt that it is mainly to Stalin's foresight in building this stronghold that Russia in 1941–2 owed her capacity to stand fast against the German onslaught long enough to receive that unacknowledged margin of assistance from the West which enabled her to survive.

[1] Bib. II, 5. Anthropologists escape notice.

[2] The Urals themselves are just outside Kazakistan, and coincident in the main with Bashkiria, in which is situated Ishimbay. Magnitogorsk is in a narrow strip of RSFSR territory between Kazakistan and Bashkiria. In the industrial picture all this region must be viewed as part of the Central Asian complex.